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ABSTRACT

Among the assumed benefits of cooperative ventures between universities and school systems is that the increased knowledge flow between the institutions should result in more relevant university programs and more theoretically and conceptually grounded decisions in the school system. However, the St. Louis (Missouri) area lacks a formal relationship of this sort. Based on participant observation in several staff development efforts involving the school district and area teacher education institutions, a model of interorganizational relations is used for analyzing school and university cooperation. Differences between universities and school systems in environment, time orientation, stratification, and complexity are explained as reasons why formal interorganizational relationships are unlikely. What has become institutionalized is an informal, ad hoc, and personalized way of transfering knowledge from one organization to the other. Individuals performing staff development consulting for the St. Louis schools view themselves as translators of research and synthesizers of the literature. The relative distance between universities and schools is seen as advantageous in sifting fads from substantial findings, and in keeping schools independent. A 15-item bibliography is appended. (MLF)

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STAFF DEVELOPMENT IN THE ST. LOUIS PUBLIC SCHOOLS: AN INTER-ORGANIZATIONAL ANALYSIS

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Staff Development in the St. Louis Public Schools: An Inter-organizational Analysis

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Introduction

From the time that the first departments of education were established in universities (in the late 1800s), there has been a strong interest in inter-organizational cooperation between universities and K-12 school systems. In the last twenty years, federal funds expanded a wide range of cooperative ventures in staff development, evaluation, research and development, and policy assistance.

In this paper, the apparent motives and values that relate to cooperative ventures will be briefly described. The discussion will then focus on an analysis of cooperative ventures between area universities and colleges and an urban school district. Inter-organizational theory will provides a framework for the analysis.

Motives and Values

Values and motives are interrelated in any organizational setting. That is, the motives for doing something are related to the values held by the organizational members. Moreover, the motives and values operate at different levels; some are personal, some are related to the organization, and

others are related to the cause with which both organizations are concerned.

Schools, colleges and departments of education in universities and school systems are contributors to education, or at least schooling. They are part of a configuration (Guba and Clark, 1974) of agencies that deal with the operation of the schooling enterprise. The functions of these agencies may be different, but together they serve the cause of schooling.

For purposes of this discussion, the assumption is that universities have two main functions in relation to schooling. One is to generate and disseminate knowledge and the other is to credential professional personnel for positions in schools. The schools have a primary function of providing instruction and socialization of children and youth.

There is a presumption that those who have been credentialed need to be kept abreast of new knowledge generated by the university. Thus, cooperative staff development programs seem to be desirable. Knowledge generated by the university can also inform decision making and policy development. Program evaluation provides another reason for cooperation. In addition, schools produce craft knowledge that is relevant to teacher and administrator credentialing, and internships, practica, and student

teaching provide another tie-in. Thus, one motive and value in support of close working relations between the two kinds of organizations is enhancing schooling.

Not only does schooling benefit, but close working relations are potentially beneficial to both types of agencies. If the knowledge and assistance provided by the university is valid, the programs of the schools should become more effective. If the experiences of the student teachers and interns are properly structured and managed, the students in the university's credentialing programs should be more desirable graduates. The knowledge flowing between the two kinds of organizations should also help inform each other's actions resulting in more relevant university programs and more theoretically and conceptually grounded decisions in the school system.

Increased funding is also an institutional motive. At a time when more federal funds were available than are presently, both school districts and universities were eagerly submitting proposals that would bring in more money. Many of these programs used fiscal incentives to encourage school district and university cooperation. In the absence of such funds, cooperation still provides a potential source of funds. Typically, however, it means funds will flow from the district to the university.

At a personal level motives and values become very

complex. For some school people association with a university is perceived as providing prestige and status within the school system. Such association may also provide entre' into an adjunct faculty position which in turn may lead to a permanent university position upon retirement from the school system. (Although such a career route is no longer as available as it once was.) For faculty from a university, the motives may include financial remuneration, a locale for conducting research, and a chance to display the latest training program. For reasons to be discussed later, working in schools gives university personnel very little, if any, prestige or status in the university.

It would seem that there are substantial grounds upon which to build a mutually beneficial, institutionalized, formal cooperative relationship between schools and universities. The reality, however, falls short of the potential.

In the St. Louis metropolitan area with four universities (two public and two private) and a few small private colleges and over 40 school districts, no such relations exist. In fact, with regard to staff development, a federally funded teacher center did not involve any of the universities other than on the policy board (as required by the rules). A multiple district effort currently underway does not involve the universities or the colleges in a substantive way. The

St. Louis City Schools are exploring such a relationship with one institution. That institution used to be the normal school of the school district and is now a state supported undergraduate college without the usual university norms and social system. The dominant mode is ad hoc relations based upon personal efforts. A national study of urban school systems (Chase, 1980) did not find a substantially different situation. One can infer from Eisner (1984) and Baker (1984) that such relations are not common.

In the following sections a model of inter-organizational relations (Sebring, 1977) will be used as a framework for analyzing school and university cooperation in the St. Louis Public Schools. The analysis emerges out of a participant-observer role in several staff development efforts involving the school district and area teacher education institutions.

The Setting

The St. Louis city school system is an urban school district of about 55,000 students. The major concern of the district and the community for the last several years has been a desegregation suit filed in 1972. Substantial resources have been consumed in implementing first a consent decree, then a court order, and now a settlement agreement with a large staff development component in it. The settlement agreement with 23 surrounding school districts

provides for transfers of students between the city and county schools.

Beginning in 1981, the district began suffering a very severe financial crisis. By the 1982-1983 school year, drastic actions were taken. Some 1800 teaching and support staff were laid-off; programs in art, physical education, and music as well as other areas were eliminated; and the pupil/teacher ratio climbed to at least 35:1. A fairly large staff development program and staff was also dismantled. In the spring of 1983, a new superintendent was hired. As a result of a court order preventing a roll-back of real estate taxes and requiring the state to support a desegregation remedy, the system's financial situation has improved and staff positions and programs reinstated.

In other respects, St. Louis is a typical urban school system. About 77 percent of the students are black and concentrated in one area of the city (north side). Most of the buildings are old and in poor repair; a few newer (1950s) buildings were built to contain black students in the north side. As other urban school systems, St. Louis had its own teacher college. It is now a state supported undergraduate college. Relatively speaking, the staff of the system is to a large extent an older staff. Nearly 81 percent of the principals are 46 years of age or older (Walter, 1983), for example. Most of the staff are graduates of the school

system. Historically, the system has been heavily centralized and bureaucratized, a tradition that is being reinforced in the new administration

The age of the staff, its provincialism, and the demands of the quality education components of the court order indicate a need for extensive staff development. With funding provided through the court order, a staff development division has been created and is being staffed. The state college, with seed monies from a local foundation, is also attempting to put together a capability to provide staff development to the schools. One of the requirements of the foundation support is that other area colleges and universities be involved in the effort. So far, little demonstrable collaboration has occured.

Analysis

Unlike many analyses, this one will begin with an assertion and a corollary, rather than ending with a conclusion. First, the assertion:

> **It is highly unlikely that formal, long-term inter-organizational relations can be formed between schools, colleges, and departments of education in universities and local school districts.**

Next, the corollary:

> **The most likely form of relations between such organizations is in the form of ad hoc, situation-specific events arranged between individuals acting within the discretionary powers of their positions.**

Universities and schools are two important agencies in the configuration of organizations with functions related to schooling. While they are both concerned with schooling, their functions are different, though complementary. But these organizations are very different from each other in terms of their task (Lawrence and Lorsch, 1969) or proximal (Lipham and Hoeh, 1974) environment, their goals and time orientation, stratification structures, and complexity. These differences serve to keep relations among these organizations loosely coupled (Weick, 1976).

Environment. When the environments of the two organizations are compared, the university environment is much more placid, stable, and predictable. The environment of a school system is more aptly described as turbulent and politicized.

The coalitions on boards of education can turn over every two or three years. In the most recent election, for example, the new superintendent's majority vote was not continued over into the new board. When new superintendents are selected, there is usually a substantial change in key leadership roles.

Deans of education are not such public targets as are

superintendents and remain in their roles longer. The school, college, or department of education in a university is buffered from the environment by the larger university. A school system has no such buffering, and changes in community expectations are felt much more quickly.

Data gathered in the course of several interactions suggests that school people wonder why the school of education in a nearby university is not more responsive to the reforms suggested by several recent reports. Partially in response to such expressions, the dean of the school of education requested that the faculty spend time reviewing the reports. The faculty response has not resulted in any changes. In part, the lack of response is due to the buffering of the larger university which has not clearly indicated that it values such reforms.

Another view of the effect of the environment is posited by Meyer, Scott, and Deal (1979). Organizations such as schools and universities are viewed as "institutional" and enterprises such as in business and industry as "technical." The major distinction is that institutional organizations invest energy in maintaining their socially expected characteristics and technical organizations invest energy in protecting their work core so as to maintain their profitability.

Arguably, there are differences among "institutional"

organizations. University based schools or colleges of education are expected to be different from school systems. Many of these differences are implicitly and explicitly stated in legislation.

Teacher education institutions do not operate schools systems. Occasionally they have laboratory schools, but such are the exception. Moreover, such operations are used for training and research purposes. Ordinarily, schools do not conduct teacher certification programs and conduct research. In Missouri there are regulations, legislation, and constitutional provisions which assign teacher certification to institutions of higher education.

Function and Goal Differences. Because of their different functions, the goals of a teacher education institution and a school system are different. School systems have goals related to instructing students academically and socially. Goals in teacher education institutions are more related to inquiry and certification of professionals.

While both are expected to serve their environments in some way, service, in the sense of providing technical assistance, has a low priority among the goals of a university. Schools serve by providing instruction; universities serve by generating knowledge and providing long term, in-depth preparation of professionals. Even extension programs are typically semester long courses since such

courses must be approved by the non-extension faculty. Even though extension programs have traditionally been provided as a service, the real service is to provide graduate courses toward a program to students in more convenient locations.

The goals of school systems, interrelated with environmental pressures, tend to create a shorter time orientation among school personnel. Schools want solutions which have some likelihood of relatively immediate effect (Rankin, 1983). For example, discipline problems must be resolved within one or two years. Achievement scores are expected to show a rise within a year after implementing an effective schools model.

In contrast, university personnel see school concerns such as discipline and achievement levels as very complex. This perception of complexity along with with the knowledge of the nature of research gives rise to a different time orientation that precludes immediate solutions and actions responsive to environmental pressures.

The current desegregation case in St. Louis, provides an example of this difference in time orientation. So far as the court is concerned, the order being implemented is designed to meet constitutional requirement--that, so far as feasible, the vestiges of a dual system be eliminated, "root and branch." Educational programs such as magnet schools and increasing the quality of education along with voluntary

student transfers are designed to bring this about in five years. The system can satisfy the court when it can demonstrate that the programs are in place and report that the numbers of black and white students involved meet the goals.

A number of university faculty are involved as consultants in helping design and implement programs. While they are motivated to contribute for both altruistic and monetary reasons, many of them are are not too sanguine that such efforts will do much about eliminating segregation root and branch. The problems, from their perspective, are much too complex and the proposed responses inadequate, if not dishonest. For these persons, more research, experimentation, and study are required. Conceptions of complexity lead to a longer time orientation.

Stratification Differences. Hage and Aiken (1970) defined stratification in terms of the reward structure of an organization. Typically university standards for promotion and tenure are based on academic values associated with their teaching and research. To the extent service is rewarded, service in form of committee membership or leadership in a national scholarly organization is more highly esteemed than providing technical assistance to schools. There is little status and prestige associated with helping schools and thus little incentive for engaging in such activities. When

university faculty do engage in such activities they do so as paid consultants. However, they can do only a limited amount of such work because such work detracts from their teaching and, more importantly, their research.

Professional programs, such as those in schools or colleges of education, are in a double bind. On one hand they need good relations with their cousins in non-university settings. Such relations are often helpful to provide settings for research, for political reasons, and for placing graduates. At the same time, schools and colleges of education are nested in a larger organization and to gain the rewards of being a university faculty one must be responsive to those values espoused by the faculty of the larger organization. Thus, deans and other administrators exert influence to provide more service, but it is the faculty that determine promotion in rank and tenure.

This dominant stratification structure heavily influences how resources are allocated. Funds in universities are allocated primarily to teaching and research and to the necessary supportive services. A consequence of this is that insufficient, if any, internal funds are available for supporting faculty in service roles. Without release from their teaching and research expectations, faculty can not give attention to maintaining interorganizational relations. When non-faculty persons are hired to provide service, they

tend to be perceived by both the faculty and school people as second class persons; they are not the senior persons who have the expertise nor are they contributing to the values of the university. They are likely to be resented by faculty because they consume resources that otherwise would go to supporting the dominate values of the university.

Complexity. Complexity is defined as the knowledge structure of an organization (Hage and Aiken, 1970). Knowledge is viewed differently in schools and in university settings.

Schools need knowledge which increases the probability that particular actions are the "correct" ones. The nature of research, however, is that research based knowledge (as distinct from craft knowledge) only reduces the probability that a set of actions is wrong. In the most stringently controlled experiments, the results test the null hypothesis. As one moves from experimental to quasi-experimental research to field or action research to ethnographic or qualitative research the knowledge becomes less and less "certain." Moreover, in quantitative research the results are "true" only for the average or mean of the sample. Thus, there is a lot less certainty in the results of research than school people need and want. At best, research based knowledge has heuristic value.

Because school people have experienced "research that didn't work," they have a certain suspicion that distances

them from university assistance. Their suspicion, conveyed to university faculty in a variety of ways, in turn makes faculty uncomfortable and often reluctant to work in schools (Lanier, 1983). This distance is exacerbated by the school's instrumental valuation of knowledge and the university's intrinsic valuation of knowledge. University personnel are interested in pursuing knowledge for its own sake, not for its applicability.

Among the professionals in school systems a good deal of craft knowledge has been developed. Such knowledge is attractive to such educators and is often perceived as more valuable because it has been tested on the "firing line." University personnel typically do not have such knowledge and, because it is not validated through research, is not highly regarded by universities.

Summary. Several conditions constrain universities and school systems from developing tightly coupled formal institutional relations:

1. The relatively more turbulent environment of the school system and the placid environment of the university precludes the development of consistent communications among the leaders of both kinds of both organizations. Differing environmental expectations of both encourages distance.

2. Goals are different. While schools may desire and need technical assistance to achieve their goals, service is not a highly valued goal in universities. Moreover, the goals of the schools must be met in a relatively short time frame and thus they tend

to seek out solutions that promise fairly immediate returns. University personnel tend to see problems as much more complex and requiring more time for resolution. The St. Louis Public Schools are proposing to develop a K-12 curriculum in two years or so. Those in universities who have worked on curriculum development have a very different view. Thus, time orientations are different. The perceived lack of responsiveness by university personnel, works against their being perceived as helpful.

3. The reward structure of a university does not provide an incentive for providing a great deal of technical assistance to schools. Such service does not contribute to promotion and tenure, provide status or prestige, or result in higher salaries. Since technical assistance is usually provided on terms established by the schools, such work does not lend itself to research or other scholarly activities. The values on which the rewards are based preclude allocating more than minimal funds to service projects; they also limit severely in-kind services. Thus, school districts must purchase time from a university. Reciprocity (Aldrich, 1975) can not be realized in such a situation. In Missouri, state education agency and legislature expectations for universities do not include funds for service to schools.

4. Finally, different expectations for the value of research based knowledge increases the distance between universities and schools. Schools want knowledge that increases the probability of success. Research decreases the probability that one is wrong. Schools value knowledge for instrumental purposes. Researchers tend to value knowledge intrinsically.

An Alternative. The preceeding analysis suggests that a formal inter-organizational relationship has little likelihood of becoming an institutionalized feature of universities and school systems. What has become

institutionalized is an informal, ad-hoc, and personalized way of transfering knowledge from one organization to the other.

While university faculty do much of their consulting from altruistic motives, such work is also a source of income to complement their salaries. Several characteristics emerge from interviews and observations of such individuals performing staff development consulting for the St. Louis Public Schools.

These persons see themselves as translators of research, synthesizers of the literature. They also tend to speak more confidently about the meaning and value of research findings than do those who do not engage in such linking activities. They seem to be more developmentally oriented in the sense that they create what one called "packages of knowledge." They create workshop materials for sessions lasting from one or two hours to three days. Some have built into their "packages" simulations, role playing activities, and in-classroom observations. In addition to being able to package synthesized research into workshops, they include a great deal of craft knowledge gathered over time from substantial interaction with school system staffs. The combination of research synthesis and craft knowledge serves to give meaning to the research and to validate craft knowledge for their clients.

This ability to package both research and craft knowledge is one source of legitimation for such persons. If they are to continue to be sought after, however, they must be legitimated by someone in the district. Generally, those who continue to be consultants have been able to earn the respect and trust of a highly regarded administrator or supervisor. One way they earn such respect and trust is because the target group responds warmly to the consultant's program. Another way is that their work corresponds highly to the particular thrust of interest to the leadership of the district.

Finally, such persons characteristically are able to meet the requirements for promotion and tenure, but do not attain the prestige and status that more research oriented faculty do. To the extent they do publish it tends to be in professional as contrasted with research oriented journals.

Conclusion

From one perspective there seems to be sufficient reason and need for there to be close working relations between schools and colleges of education in universities and school systems. The research based knowledge of the universities should inform the actions of schools. The craft knowledge of the schools can contribute to the preparation of teachers and administrators as well as inform the research of universities.

At conferences locally and nationally, attention is frequently given to the topic of school and university relations. The development in the late 1960s and early 1970s of R&D centers, regional laboratories, TTT programs, and teacher corps programs attests to a desire for much closer and more formalized working relations than have existed. Some of the more recent work on networking, change, and linkage mechanisms also seems to suggest a need for greater interaction.

This analysis suggests, that the current level of interaction is about all that can be reasonably be expected to occur. There are several fundamental structural characteristics that constrain closer linking. While from one perspective closer linkages could increase the effectiveness of both schools and universities, another perspective suggests that the relative distance serves an important function of sifting that which is fad from that which is more substantial. Still another perspective emerging in the school renewal literature (Griffin, 1983) suggests that local renewal and ownership in change efforts requires schools to become more self-directed. Such a development could be negated by a too close relationship between schools and universities.

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